(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Several Steps have been taken by the Government/Tea Board for increasing production of tea. The steps include financial assistance by Tea Board to the tea industry through its various developmental schemes for encouraging extension planting, re-planting, rejuvenation pruning, infilling, creation of irrigation facilities and drainage etc.

(e) and (f) The following year-wise targets have been fixed for production of Tea in India during the 9th Five Year Plan Period:—

(in Mn. Kgs.)

Year	Production Target
1597-98	825
1998-99	860
1999-2000	905
2000-2001	950
2001-2002	1000

Agricultural Export

5198. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that agricultural exports amount to only 20 percent of the total exports;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this is a low percentage when 75 percent of the population is involved in this rural sector;

(c) if so, what are the reasons for the poor performance; and

(d) the steps Government plan to take?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Agricultural exports account for 18-20% of the total exports from the country.

(c) Exports of agricultural products are dependent on a number of factors such as domestic production and consumption, exportable surpluses, consumer preference, varieties being traded, quality, domestic and international prices, availability of infrastructure to store, process, transport and despatch.

(d) The steps being taken by Government to boost export of agricultural products include:

1. Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical knowhow of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers.
2. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control and modernization of processing units.
3. Eastablishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for eliminating pest incubation in the product especially the mangoes for gaining access to overseas markets.
4. Grant of Air Freight Subsidy for exports of floricultural items and select fresh fruits and vegetables.
5. Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions.
6. Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various International Airports for handling export of perishable items such as flowers, fresh fruits and vegetables.
7. Providing assistance in development of data base and dissemination of market information.
8. Providing assistance for setting up of laboratories for testing products to ensure quality, eliminating contamination and ensuring freedom from Sacteria and fungi.'

Reduction in Subsidy

5199. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have directed the Rubber Board to reduce the subsidy given for planting and replanting the rubber plants and also on fertilizers and pesticides;

(b) if so, what was the quantum of reduction on these items; and

(c) what are the reasons that prompted Government to reduce the subsidy?